

# Unit 6 Academic reading

## How Instagram is changing travel



### 1 Work in groups. Discuss these questions.

- 1 Do you use Instagram? What kind of images do you post?
- 2 In what ways do you think Instagram is changing travel?
- 3 Look at the photo taken at a famous landmark in Norway. Does the photo make you want to go there? Why? / Why not?

### 2 Work in pairs. Read the sentences and discuss the meaning of the words and phrases in bold.

- 1 The photographer **captured a shot** of the beautiful sunset.
- 2 Police are trying to tackle the recent **crimewave** in the city.
- 3 Some people **have an appetite for** adventure.
- 4 She gets **inspiration** for her artwork from nature.
- 5 People are interested in what the latest **trendsetters** are wearing.
- 6 The child was **engaged with** the toy for a long time.
- 7 He currently has over 5,000 **followers** on Instagram.
- 8 The article **shines a spotlight on** the problems of the homeless.
- 9 Some popular beaches get really **overcrowded** in summer.
- 10 He posted lots of **selfies** on Instagram yesterday.

### 3 Match the words and phrases in Exercise 2 (1–10) to these meanings (a–j).

- a draws direct attention to something or someone.
- b people who start a new fashion or make it popular.
- c took a photograph.
- d ideas that come from something or someone around you.
- e photographs you take of yourself, usually with a mobile phone.
- f people who sign up to receive information about other people using social media.
- g when there are too many people or things.
- h the feeling of wanting to have or do something very much.
- i a sudden, large increase in something.
- j very interested and involved in doing an activity.

- 4 **Work in pairs. You are going to read an article with the title ‘How Instagram is changing travel’. Discuss what ideas you think might be mentioned in the article.**
- 5 **Read the text quickly and see if it contains any of your ideas.**

### **SKILLS FOCUS: Scanning for specific information**

Scanning means reading over a text quickly to find specific information, e.g. a name or a date. Scanning helps you to read more efficiently because you can quickly identify the parts of a text that are relevant to your purpose. To scan effectively, you need to have a clear piece of information to look for then move your eyes quickly over the text until you find it. You can then slow down and read the relevant sentences or paragraph more carefully to understand the detail.

- 6 **Read the text again and match photographers (A–D) with the statements (1–6). You can use the names more than once.**

A Corey Arnold	B Johan Lolos	C Chris Burkard	D Trey Ratcliff
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- 1 Instagram is a powerful tool that makes people want to help the environment.
- 2 It is unnecessary to try to present a false image of yourself in a photograph.
- 3 People use technology to get ideas for where to go to get away from their technology.
- 4 Technology makes it very easy for us to go and visit the places we see in photographs.
- 5 Instagram images give us a better idea of what a destination is really like.
- 6 Planning a trip using Instagram for ideas is a very strange thing to do.

- 7 **Supporting examples** **The writer uses specific examples of tourist destinations to support her arguments and make them clearer and more interesting. Match each argument the writer makes (1–4) with the destination given as an example (a–d).**

- 1 Some areas are using Instagram as a way of growing their tourist numbers.
  - 2 When too many people want the same Instagram photo it can lead to problems.
  - 3 What you see in an Instagram photograph is not always a true reflection of reality.
  - 4 Some tourists will deliberately put themselves in danger to try to take an Instagram shot.
- a Trolltunga, Norway
  - b Wanaka, New Zealand
  - c Zhangjiajie Grand Canyon, China
  - d Caba da Roca, Portugal

- 8 **Work in groups and discuss these questions.**

- 1 Has Instagram ever influenced your decision to visit somewhere? How?
- 2 Does Instagram give you a good insight into what a place is like? Why? / Why not?
- 3 Can Instagram be a useful way of highlighting environmental or social issues? Why? / Why not?
- 4 Do you think it’s better to copy someone else’s travel experiences or create your own? Why?

## How Instagram is changing travel

The photograph is of a scene in Norway. It shows a few clouds moving over a clear blue lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Above it all is a traveller, standing on top of Trolltunga, a well-known rock with an unusual formation. There's not another person in sight – at least, that's what Instagram would have you believe. What this photograph doesn't show you is the long line of travellers waiting at Trolltunga, all keen to capture their version of the famous Instagram shot. Between 2009 and 2014, visitors to Trolltunga increased from 500 to 40,000 in what many consider a wave of social media-inspired tourism.

Instagram has more than 500 million active users sharing an average of 80 million photos a day. Clearly people have an appetite for photographic images, and some people think it's influencing our travel decisions. 'I see there is a desire to escape to these landscapes, to do something real, because more than ever, everyone has their head buried in their phones,' says photographer Corey Arnold, 'but where do they get their inspiration to travel? Instagram.'

The proof is in the numbers. For example, in 2015, the tourism board of the small town of Wanaka, New Zealand, began inviting 'influencers' – social media trendsetters with large followings – to post about their adventures. The result was the fastest tourism growth in the country: a 14 per cent increase. 'I guess following photographers on Instagram gives a more genuine insight into a place than looking for inspiration in a tourism brochure,' says Johan Lolos, who started his career as a tourism photographer after posting images of Wanaka on Instagram. 'That's also what makes it effective as a marketing tool. People engage with Instagram far more than other social media.' 'When you see an image on Instagram you're less than ten clicks away from being able to purchase a ticket and actually go there yourself,' says Chris Burkard, a photographer with more than two million Instagram followers. 'I've met people who have travelled to places because of my photographs, and that wasn't happening to me ten years ago.' This sharing of experiences has not only created communities where people can connect and share their lives, but it can also shine the spotlight on significant social and environmental issues. 'The only way we're going to get people to go out there and care about these places is if we get them there,' Burkard says. 'That's the first step to being a conservationist – caring about it. It's never been more cool to be in nature.'

But what happens when too many people are attracted by the same image? Perhaps the downside to Instagram is when it encourages overcrowding and environmental damage. In 2016, China opened the world's highest and longest glass bottom bridge, stretching over 300 metres over the beautiful Zhangjiajie Grand Canyon. Within the first few days, thousands of tourists swarmed the bridge, eager to capture unique photographs. After just thirteen days, the bridge was forced to close due to overcrowding.

Another issue is safety. Many travellers want to copy well-known Instagram shots and put their lives in danger in the process. There are many reports of tourists ignoring official signs and safety warnings at famous landmarks all over the world, often with tragic consequences. In 2015, a young Australian traveller fell to her death while trying to re-create the iconic shot at Trolltunga, while at Caba da Roca in Portugal, a Polish couple crossed the safety barrier to take a selfie and fell off the cliff's edge.

So what is the solution? The photographer Trey Ratcliff believes we all have a responsibility to post accurate representations of the places we visit, 'a lot of people want to show that they are leading some kind of perfect life, which is quite silly really. I think it's much more fun to be real.' Perhaps the answer is not to stop travelling, but to travel with more awareness, for example by going to places that are less popular and sharing your own experiences instead of trying to copy others. 'I think a lot about social media's role in tourism,' says Burkard. 'Now you can organize your whole travel experience based on the images you see online and it's an unnatural approach to travel. It makes me wonder what happened to exploration.'